

Derbyshire Language Scheme (DLS)

The DLS (Knowles & Masidlover, 1962) is a system of language interventions intended for individuals who have difficulties in developing language skills. It is a step by step programme aimed to improve a child's understanding and use of language.

What is Derbyshire Language Scheme?

The approach is based on the idea of 'information carrying words'. An information carrying word is any word in a sentence that must be understood in order to follow an instruction. An example is saying to a child 'take the teddy' with the person holding only a teddy out. The child does not have to understand a single word in this sentence because the person has shown them what they want; there are no information carrying words. However, if there was a teddy and a book and the person says 'take the teddy' the child needs to differentiate between the teddy and the book, and therefore the sentence has one information carrying word.

Instructions can have a varying amount of information carrying words depending on the cues provided such as visual clues, objects, gestures etc. By using the DLS, children are taught to understand and use sentences with increasing numbers of information carrying words.

Why use Derbyshire Language Scheme?

There are a range of benefits to using this approach, including (but not limited to):

- Increasing the child's understanding and use of vocabulary;
- Increasing the child's understanding and use of sentences;
- Improving the child's use of grammar.

Who can benefit from Derbyshire Language Scheme?

The approach can be used for one to one therapy with children and young people for whom (1) building vocabulary, (2) increasing understanding and use of language and (3) basic grammar are key goals. The approach is often adapted for use with adults with learning disabilities.

Who can deliver Derbyshire Language Scheme?

The approach can be delivered directly by a Speech and Language Therapist. It can also be delivered by teachers and TAs in 1:1 and small group contexts.

Evidence for Derbyshire Language Scheme

The approach has never been formally evaluated, although it has been used significantly for many years and has strong face validity.

References

Knowles, W. & Masidlover, M. (1982). *The Derbyshire Language Scheme*. Published by Derbyshire County Council.